

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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### **USFWS announces more than \$3.2 million in funding for Great Lakes fish and wildlife**

Midwest Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Tom Melius, recently announced more than \$3.2 million in Federal funding under the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act to support Regional Projects that will expand mass marking capabilities for lake trout and salmon, and protect important habitat surrounding state and federal wildlife refuges of southwest Lake Erie. Both projects are supported by an \$8 million allocation from the administration's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

Regional Projects through the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act are projects accomplished by the USFWS on behalf of the applicants. Applications for regional projects must involve more than one Great Lakes watershed, be submitted by one or more state agency directors and/or tribal chairs and reviewed by a 24 member Proposal Review Committee that makes funding recommendations to the USFWS. Once approved, the USFWS works in close partnership with the appropriate state or tribal agency to implement the project.

The *Implementation of Mass Marking Technology in the Great Lakes* project builds the capacity of the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program through the purchase of two automated coded-wire tagging trailers for a total cost of \$2.6 million. The goal of the Great Lakes Mass Marking Program is to mark all 25 million trout and salmon stocked into the Great Lakes by all federal, state, and tribal agencies to improve the restoration and management of Great Lakes fish communities and the habitats they depend on. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment (MDNRE) submitted the project to enhance fish restoration and management in the Great Lakes.

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“The ability to tag all 25 million trout and salmon stocked into the Great Lakes using the mass marking technology will greatly enhance our ability to measure the success of rehabilitation and management strategies to improve populations of fish across the Great Lakes,” says Kelley Smith, Fish Chief for the MDNRE. “Acquiring these two marking trailers will double the tagging capacity of the USFWS mass marking program, which in turn will help State management agencies on the Great Lakes achieve their goals for fisheries management.”

Land development near state and federal wildlife refuges in southwest Lake Erie continues to threaten the ability of those refuges to protect migratory birds and other fish and wildlife. The *State and Federal Refuge Protection Buffers in the Southwest Lake Erie Watershed* project, at a cost of \$630,100, will enable the purchase of more than 200 acres of conservation easements around these important refuge lands to provide protection from development far into future.

“The wetland and marsh refuges of southwest Lake Erie are key remnants of the Great Black Swamp,” said Jim Marshall, acting Chief of the Ohio Division of Wildlife. “Protection of this habitat is crucial for the success of migratory birds traveling through Ohio.” The ultimate goal for Michigan and Ohio is to protect at least 500 acres through conservation easements.

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act is the primary federal program dedicated to restoring important fish and wildlife and the habitat they depend on in the Great Lakes region. Since 1998 the Restoration Act has provided \$5.6 million dollars in federal funding to 97 restoration projects, which when combined with required matching funds equates to \$9.2 million worth of benefits to Great Lakes fish, wildlife and the habitats they depend on. For more information on the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, including how to apply for funding, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/fisheries/glfwra-grants.html>.

In 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative provided \$8 million to support projects under the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act. This funding was provided by the President’s 2010 Budget which provided \$475 million for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency –led, interagency Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For more information on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities related specifically to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, please visit [www.fws.gov/GLRI](http://www.fws.gov/GLRI).

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).